

Patrols, probe follow in wake of 60 break-ins

NORTH BRUNSWICK — For five months, residents of the Hidden Lake development were stung repeatedly by the burglary bug.

Break-ins were reported at nearly 60 apartments and houses. Items such as jewelry, cash, televisions, cameras and watches, valued at more than \$100,000, were listed as stolen.

The situation prompted township police in June to implement a full-scale investigation, which they believe ended two weeks ago with the arrest of Gregory Blackshear of New Brunswick.

The 18-year-old Redmond Street resident has been charged with 51 counts of burglary and theft — 47 of which were lodged last night during his arraignment before Municipal Court Judge Charles Kollar.

Blackshear was remanded to the Middlesex County Adult Correction Center where he has been held in lieu of \$50,000 since mid-October. The matter is being referred to the county Prosecutor's Office.

Since his arrest, no break-ins have been reported at the Route 27 development, according to police.

"We began a walking patrol during the first week in June," said Detective Robert Ruvelo. "We wanted to catch the perpetrator in the act."

So, two detectives were assigned to round-the-

clock duty at the apartment complex and two patrolmen walked the beat there from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. three nights a week, he said.

"We became highly visible in Hidden Lake," Ruvelo said.

Although during this time no one was caught burglarizing an apartment, Blackshear was a prime suspect, according to the detective.

As a juvenile, he pleaded guilty to at least 20 burglaries at Hidden Lake and had been detained at Middlefield, a home for juvenile offenders located next to the Middlesex County Youth Detention Center, Route 130, police said.

Blackshear was released from that facility on March 31.

When the rash of Hidden Lake burglaries broke out in June, Ruvelo said, township police notified neighboring departments that they were looking for the suspect.

Until then, investigators were unable to link Blackshear with the break-ins because they could not obtain a set of his fingerprints until he was arrested as an adult.

Under law, fingerprints of juveniles are not kept on record.

Blackshear turned 18 on May 2, according to police.

It was not until last month that township police received their first word on Blackshear — he was

arrested in New Brunswick and charged with possession of a weapon and possession of marijuana.

City police notified North Brunswick. Through fingerprints and photograph identifications by witnesses to several of the burglaries, Blackshear was charged late last month with four counts each of burglary and theft, according to police.

After further investigation, the number of charges was increased to 51.

Ruvelo said that detailed reports by the patrol division aided the detective bureau to link Blackshear with the burglary rash.

In addition, police said the suspect has admitted to committing many of the break-ins.

Police said that in comparing the numerous burglary reports, they found that entry was gained in similar ways — either bedroom or living room windows were pried open.

In most cases, the burglar kept a second escape route by opening the living room's sliding door.

Many burglaries occurred in the evening, ranging from one to three nightly. Several dwellings were broken into up to three times, Ruvelo said.

The burglar was selective in stealing items, he added.

If he didn't see jewelry, cash or small valuable items, he would leave, Ruvelo explained.

Except for several valuables, nothing has been recovered.